

# Indian Business Press and the 2014 Parliamentary Elections – An Analysis of Framing of Economic Policy Issues

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## Abstract

*In the run-up to the Lok Sabha election of 2014, media coverage was by and large considered to have been favourable to the Bharatiya Janata Party and critical of the incumbent government. This study analysed the framing of news and opinions on economic policy in business newspapers during the six-month period preceding the election. It found that the coverage in four leading business dailies was marginally more positive of the government than it was critical. Using concepts from social construction of reality, it reveals that even when the presentation was positive of the government, the underlying reasons for such coverage were different in different newspapers.*

**Keywords:** Lok Sabha Election, Framing, Social Construction, Business Newspapers

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## INTRODUCTION

The 2014 Lok Sabha election has come to be considered a plebiscite on the *Bharatiya Janata Party's* (BJP's) prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi (Palshikar, 2014). While that speaks of the way Modi dominated the election issues, another running theme of the election was the sustained criticism of the incumbent government – epitomised by phrases ranging from “the most corrupt government in India’s history” (CNN-IBN, PTI; 2014) to “policy paralysis” (Jha, Pannu; 2014). As the reports of

Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) on spectrum allocation set the tone, economic policy matters were particularly in focus through the second term of the UPA led Manmohan Singh government of 2009-2014. As elections approached, political parties, courts, regulators, representatives of the corporate world, the media and, as it later turned out, the voters – all found fault with the government.

While such criticism is legitimate and is part of the contestation essential to a democracy, the question of media representation of the government and its policies is of particular interest. One common case of problematic representation is the phrase ‘economic reform’, which almost always refers to the policies of privatisation and liberalisation. Because of the connotation of ‘improvement’ inherent in the word ‘reform’, policies described as reform are, in a sense, placed beyond question. At another level, ‘GDP growth’ is used as a sort of unquestionable justification for any policy or action by the government and is uncritically accepted by the news media. These cases illustrate the limitations on policy choices created by the manner in which a policy or an issue is framed in the discourse. It is proposed here to study the characteristics of media content, particularly the way economic policy issues are framed in the business press during the pre-election period.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **On Elections and Media Coverage**

There is substantial literature highlighting the influence of media coverage during elections. Cappella & Jamieson (1997) found that news frames activate certain inferences, ideas, judgments and contrasts concerning issues, policies and politicians. Iyengar (2005) says “unmediated candidate rhetoric” is less and less common as virtually all political communication is now through the media. Particularly, he contends, the actual “framers” of issues are increasingly journalists rather than candidates or political pundits. In India too, the media is seen as a key driver of politics, which became more and more mediated after 1989 (Palshikar, 2014). It has been argued that the

power of media to frame electoral issues has become crucial during the elections (Ibid). Jamieson & Waldman (2003) attribute the failure of Al Gore in his challenge to George W. Bush in the contested 2000 US presidential election outcome to the way the issue was framed in the media. Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007) cite the case of Frank Luntz, a US Republican pollster who systematically used the concept of framing as a campaign tool. Luntz identified terms and phrases that resonated with specific interpretive schemas among audiences and helped shift people's attitudes.

### **On Economy**

Varma and Sardesai (2014) notes that the *Bharatiya Janata Party's* prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi stressed on economy and development more than his party's supposed plank of *Hindutva* or social conservatism. The paper says Modi repeatedly highlighted his plans to improve infrastructure, address unemployment, and fight poverty, and coined the slogan of "Minimum Government and Maximum Governance". The paper claims that Modi managed to connect to voters with high media exposure with his promise of reducing the role of the state in the economy and his image as a pro-business reformer. According to Suri (2009), there is a consensus among scholars of the political economy of voting that the economic factor explains, as a crude average, about one-third of the vote. Varma and Sardesai (2014) also points to the same effect, though it considers people's exposure to media and does not take into account media framing of policy issues. The paper concludes that, with regard to the 2014 election, electorates with high exposure to media were more likely to support economic liberalisation and to vote for BJP.

Literature also offers a perspective on the prominence given to the economy and economic policies during the election under study. Frankel (2005) marks the late 1970s as the period when the government realised that import-substituting industrialisation as a strategy had been exhausted. It was a period of transition to the new policy paradigm of liberalisation.

Varadarajan (2014) characterises 2014 as a moment of similar transition, as the immediate gains to be made from liberalisation have reached their natural limit. Henceforth, it is said, the path to amass wealth is not through manufacturing but through exploitation of the resources under government ownership (Siddharthan, 2013).

### **On Framing**

Communication research has moved beyond the idea of ‘agenda-setting’, with its focus on the topics / subjects covered prominently in the media, to ‘framing’, with its focus on how an issue is presented. The latter approach can reveal latent aspects of media texts. An early study of framing, showed that the way news about social problems was framed affected whether audiences were ‘more’ or ‘less’ likely to ‘blame the victim’ for their troubles (Iyengar, 1991). Similarly, research into the 1991 Gulf War showed that particular ways of framing of news encouraged audiences to endorse military action rather than diplomatic solutions. Menashe & Siegel (1998), who studied the predominant framing tactics used by the tobacco industry in the US, found that the tobacco industry created frame that embodied a central message and theme which was used consistently over time, and was thus more effective than those opposing tobacco. In India, Usharani and Kapur (2011) found that Muslims were framed more favourably in Indian English dailies than in language newspapers.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is designed to identify the way the government policies concerning the economy are framed in newspapers so as to be able to say whether the coverage was favourable to the government or critical of the government or as may be the case. The perspective inherent in this aim is that news, and media content in general, is not an objective reflection of social reality but is a selective construction created by the interacting forces of the media, the sources of news and the larger socio-political-economic

system. Such a perspective is best supported by the constructionist approach.

In their book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann say that reality is socially constructed through ‘typification’, ‘objectivation’, ‘institutionalisation’, ‘legitimation’ and ‘social stock of knowledge’. ‘Typification’ means to be a characteristic or a representative example of something. According to these theorists, we understand reality through typificatory schemes, or by extension, through a continuum of typifications. ‘Objectivation’ refers to the quality of an idea or expression by which it is capable of being represented in physical products that are then available to others as indices of the creator’s idea or expression. Everyday life in society is maintained by linguistic signification of objectivations.

‘Institutionalization’ results from reciprocal typification of habitualised actions by types of actors. Such typification initially exists *in statu nascendi* between the original actors ‘A’ and ‘B’, and has the quality of ‘ad hoc conception’ of those two individuals. However, it becomes a historical institution with the entry of others who were not part of its creation. The institutions are then experienced as possessing a reality of their own.

‘Legitimation’ is being able to be defended with logic or justification. The above theorists say that when knowledge of [social reality] is by way of hearsay, the original meaning may or may not be accessible to people in terms of memory. It therefore becomes necessary to interpret this meaning to them in various legitimating formulas. These legitimations offer a protective cover of cognitive and normative interpretation. Since media content is considered to be socially constructed, the problem under study becomes one of identifying (from the selected media content) the typifications, objectivations, actors involved in institutionalising the typifications, and the legitimations.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. What were the most common typifications during the study period?

RQ2. Who played the lead role in institutionalising the typifications:

Newspaper / Govt / Private sector / Regulators / Others?

RQ3. What were the common legitimations for: criticism of govt / praise of govt / criticism of corporates / praise of corporates and so on?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Framing analysis**

The idea of framing sees news content as carrying embedded social meaning and as reflecting the prevalent organising principles in society through journalists' selection of words, news sources, and metaphors. According to Entman (1993), to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and / or treatment recommendation for the item described. The constructionist paradigm of framing (D'Angelo, 2002) treats frames as interpretative packages or collections of rhetorical devices that sponsors (sources) and journalists use to understand the social world. The focus is on the frame-building process. Identifying the reasoning devices and the cluster of concepts in the narratives, matters to this perspective.

Based on the framing matrix presented by Charlotte Ryan in her book, *Prime Time Activism* (1999), the following aspects are identified in each story:

- Dominant frame of the story
- Core position (or concise statement of the frame's primary argument)
- Sponsor (the source of the frame)
- Source of the problem as suggested by the frame
- Implied solution to the problem
- Core human value or broad principle to which the frame appeals.

The theoretical concepts from Berger & Luckmann can be mapped onto the methodological terms as follows:

Theoretical concept	In operational terms
Typification	Dominant frame of the story
Objectivation	Policy / action / development' to which the frame is applied
Institutionalization	Sponsor of the frame
Legitimation	Broad principle

**Data collection** - Stories have been selected from four leading Indian business newspapers as detailed below:

**Universe:** Four business newspapers, namely, Economic Times, Mint, Business Line and Business Standard published in India were selected.

**Sample:** Only Front page and Editorial / Opinion pages of each paper were selected for the study.

**Period of Study:** November 2013 to April 2014

**Unit of analysis:** Story

**Inclusion criteria:** News and opinion pieces dealing with actual or expected actions of the government

**Exclusion Criteria:** Letters to the Editor, Advertisements and Advertorials

Each story was coded as per the following coding sheet:

- 1. Frame (to be inferred by the coder):** A frame is a way of packaging and positioning an issue so that it is seen in a certain perspective
- 2. Core position (to be inferred by the coder):** Concise statement of the frame's primary argument
- 3. Sponsor (to be identified from the story):** The source of the frame
- 4. Frame adoption (to be identified):** Whether the frame is attributed to a source.
- 5. Source of the situation** (The first source as suggested by the frame, to be inferred)
- 6. Is the situation good or a problem** (to be inferred)
- 7. Implied consequence** (as suggested by the story, to be inferred)

- 8. Broad principle (to be inferred by the coder):** The core human value to which the frame appeals. Eg., equality, justice, efficiency, etc.

The study was carried out in the following steps:

1. The stories were selected based on the inclusion criteria mentioned above from (i) front page and (ii) Editorial / Opinion pages of each day's edition of each newspaper, month-wise.
2. Each story was coded as per the coding sheet above, as shown in the following example:

Example: **4 days, 11 Coal Blocks, Rs. 52,610 crore: Rich Haul for States From Auction**  
Business Line, Feb. 18, 2014

Frame	Core position	Sponsor	Frame Adoption	Source of the situation	Is the situation good / a problem?	Implied consequence	Broad principle
Auction as a good policy	Government revenues from mining set to rise	Government official	Attributed to unnamed government official	–	Good	Higher revenues for government	Admin efficiency

The frames that emerged from the sample were particular to their respective stories, and too many. To find a pattern in the frames and to answer the research question on the most common typifications, the original frames were then grouped into nine broad categories, namely:

- (i) Critical of government
- (ii) Positive about government
- (iii) Critical of regulators
- (iv) Positive about regulators
- (v) Critical of private sector
- (vi) Positive about private sector
- (vii) Favourable economic conditions
- (viii) Unfavourable economic conditions
- (ix) Policy suggestion



- (iii) and (iv) regulators included Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Forward Markets Commission (FMC) and also various courts because of the essentially regulatory nature of their work.
- (v) and (vi), private sector included private companies as well as private company executives.
- (vii) and (viii) were applied when the frame was not referring to any government policy but to the various indicators of the state of the economy such as inflation, growth rate or trade balance.
- (ix) was applied when the story was making a policy suggestion without primarily being critical or positive about the government or the others.

In the above example, the frame ‘Auction as a good policy’ would qualify as ‘Positive about government’. The broad principles are the grounds on which the story is framed in a particular way. In the above example, the underlying argument may be inferred from the story as the government doing its job well. Hence, the broad principle is coded as ‘Administrative efficiency’.

Overall, the following codes have emerged from the sample:

- **Efficiency:** This principle was used in the sense of maximum output for a given input
- **Administrative efficiency:** This was used to indicate a job well done by the government / regulator
- **Growth as priority:** Economic growth as the most important goal
- **Markets decide:** This was used when the underlying argument of the frame is that something should be left to the markets, rather than be decided by the government
- **Public interest:** This includes welfare, democracy, environment, equality, and fairness
- **Pro-business policy / Private interests as priority:** This was used when the frame advocates private sector interests

### **Inter-coder reliability test**

The coding sheet was tested with two coders including this author. For the purpose of assessing inter-coder reliability, percentage agreement was calculated as there is no standard method applicable to this case, where there were no pre-defined categories into which content is coded. (The nine categories of frames mentioned above have been derived from and after initial coding, for the sake of analysis.) Overall, the two coders coded a set of 10 stories from within the sample using the above coding sheet. They agreed on 67 out of 80 counts, which amounts to 0.84, or 84 per cent agreement.

In the absence of a standard method, the percentage agreement by itself may not be adequate. To gain a better picture, the percentage agreement is calculated at different levels. First, the above eight coding 'questions' are divided into groups based on whether they require simple 'identification' or 'inference'. The 'inference' group is sub-divided into primary and secondary inference. A primary inference is one based on identifiable information in the story, whereas secondary inference is an inference based on a primary inference.

Based on these working definitions, codes (3) and (4) are grouped as 'identification codes' as they require identification of source and whether the frame is attributed, respectively, from the given story. Similarly, codes (2), (5), (6) and (7) – namely, 'Core position', 'Source of the situation', 'Is the situation good or a problem', and 'Implied consequence' – are grouped as primary inferences. Finally, the codes (1) and (8) i.e., 'Frame' and 'Dominant principle' respectively, are considered secondary inferences.

The percentage agreement calculated for these three groups is given below:

<b>Identification codes</b>	<b>Agreement</b>	<b>Disagreement</b>
	100%	0
<b>Primary inference codes</b>	75%	25%
<b>Secondary inference codes</b>	85%	15%

This level of agreement between the coders is considered sufficient for the purpose of this study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are summarized in the tables below:

**Table 1. Most Common Typifications (I.E.Dominant Frames)  
During the Study Period**

No	Typification	Mint (N=256)	ET (N=225)	BL (N=276)	BS (N=261)
1	Critical of government	60 (23.4%)	43 (19.1%)	60 (21.7%)	55 (21.1%)
2	Positive about government	62 (24.2%)	47 (20.9%)	65 (23.5%)	43 (16.5%)
3	Critical of regulator	15 (5.8%)	11 (4.9%)	24 (8.7%)	17 (6.5%)
4	Positive about regulator	37 (14.4%)	20 (8.9%)	30 (10.8%)	29 (11.1%)
5	Critical of corporate	10 (3.9%)	8 (3.5%)	6 (2.2%)	4 (1.5%)
6	Positive about corporate	0 (0)	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0)
7	Favourable economic conditions	22 (8.6%)	23 (10.2%)	23 (8.3%)	23 (8.8%)
8	Unfavourable economic conditions	22 (8.6%)	8 (3.5%)	23 (8.3%)	28 (10.7%)
9	Policy suggestion	28 (10.9%)	64 (28.4%)	43 (15.6%)	62 (23.7%)

The following conclusions may be drawn from Table 1.

- (i) In *Mint*, the stories were marginally more positive about government (24.2 per cent) than they were critical of it (23.4 per cent). The trend is the same in *Economic Times* (20.9 per cent vs. 19.1 per cent) and *Business Line* (23.5 per cent vs. 21.7 per cent). *Business Standard* is the exception with 16.5 per cent of the stories positive about government while 21.1 per cent were critical of it.
- (ii) When it comes to Regulators, all the four newspapers were more positive about them than they were critical. Similarly, corporates were framed more critically than positively across all four newspapers.
- (iii) The proportion of stories with 'favourable economic conditions' frame and the 'unfavourable economic conditions' frame was equal in *Mint* and *Business Line* and roughly equal in *Business Standard*, while in

*Economic Times* there were far more ‘favourable’ frames than there were ‘unfavourable’ ones.

- (iv) *Economic Times* and *Business Standard* used ‘policy suggestion’ frames more than any other frame.

**Table 2. Who Played the Lead Role in Institutionalizing Typifications?  
(I.E., Sponsors of the Dominant Frame)**

	Newspaper	Government	Regulator	Private sector	Others (Columnists, Opposition leaders, etc )
<b>Mint</b>	174 (68.2%)	41 (16%)	14 (5.5%)	7 (2.7%)	19 (7.4%)
<b>ET</b>	197 (89.5%)	7 (3.2%)	2 (0.9%)	1 (0.45%)	13 (5.9%)
<b>BL</b>	204 (72.6)	15 (6.8%)	7 (2.5%)	7 (2.5%)	48 (17%)
<b>BS</b>	239 (91.2%)	4 (1.5%)	2 (0.76%)	4 (1.5%)	13 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>814 (79.9%)</b>	<b>67 (6.6%)</b>	<b>25 (2.4%)</b>	<b>19 (1.8%)</b>	<b>93 (9.1%)</b>

The following conclusions may be drawn from Table 2.

- (i) ‘Newspaper’ (i.e., journalists) have sponsored the frames for stories in not less than two thirds of the sample in all the four newspapers studied. In theoretical terms, the ‘newspaper’ played lead role in institutionalising the typifications.
- (ii) In *Mint*, the ‘government’ was sponsor for 16 per cent of the stories, followed by ‘Others’ including columnists, Opposition party leaders, etc accounting for 7.4 per cent; ‘Regulators’ for 5.5 per cent of the stories and ‘Private sector’ for 2.7 per cent of the stories.
- (iii) In *Economic Times*, ‘Others’ sponsored the second largest number of frames (5.9 per cent) after ‘Newspaper’, followed by ‘Regulators’ for 0.9 per cent of the stories and ‘Private sector’ for 0.45 per cent of the stories.
- (iv) In *Business Line* too, ‘Others’ sponsored the most number of frames after ‘Newspaper’ at 17.8 per cent, followed by ‘Government’ for 6.8 per cent of the stories in the sample, while ‘Private sector’ and

- ‘Regulators’ both sponsored frames for an equal 2.5 per cent of stories.
- (v) In *Business Standard*, ‘Others’ accounted for 5 per cent of the frames, while ‘Government’ and ‘Private sector’ both sponsored frames for 1.5 per cent followed by ‘Regulators’ at 0.75 per cent.
- (vi) Overall, across all four newspapers, ‘Newspaper’ sponsored frames for close to 80 per cent of the stories, followed by ‘Others’ for 9.1 per cent, ‘Government’ for 6.6 per cent, ‘Regulators’ for 2.4 per cent and ‘Private sector’ for 1.8 per cent.

**Table 3. Legitimisations Used for Each Frame in Mint Newspaper**

MINT (Six months)	Efficiency	Admin Efficiency	Growth a priority	Markets decide	Public interest	Pro-business policy/ Private interests
Critical of government	5	26	2	1	16	10
Positive about government	13	24	11	2	14	6
Critical of regulator	0	10	0	0	4	2
Positive about regulator	6	16	1	5	9	3
Critical of corporates	1	1	0	0	4	0
Positive about corporates	0	0	0	0	0	0
Favourable econo- mic Conditions	1	5	11	5	4	2
Unfavourable eco- nomic Conditions	0	3	16	0	0	2
Policy suggestion	6	11	3	3	9	3

(Note: Table shows number of instances when a particular frame is justified on the broad principles given in Row 1)

In *Mint*, the paper used 'Critical of Government' frame on four major grounds, namely, Administrative efficiency (43 per cent), Public interest (26.6 per cent), Pro-business policy (16.6 per cent), and Efficiency (8.3 per cent).

It used 'Positive about Government' frame on five grounds, namely, Administrative efficiency (40 per cent), Public interest (23.3 per cent), Efficiency (21.6 per cent), Growth as priority (18.3 per cent) and Pro-business policy (10 per cent).

The 'Critical of regulator' frame was based on Administrative efficiency and Public interest grounds. It used positive about regulator' frame mostly on grounds of Administrative efficiency, Public interest and Efficiency grounds. The paper was 'Critical of corporates' on Public interest principle mostly. It adopted both the 'favorable economic circumstances' and 'unfavorable economic circumstances' frames on the principle of 'growth as priority'. Finally, the 'policy suggestion' frame was underpinned mostly by Administrative efficiency, Public interest, Efficiency, Growth as priority, Markets decide and Pro-business policy.

**Table 4. Legitimations used in the Economic Times**

Economic Times (Six months)	Efficiency	Admin Efficiency	Growth as priority	Markets decide	Welfare Dem/Env / Equality	Pro-busi- ness policy is good/ Pvt interests
Critical of government	8	14	2	2	10	12
Positive about government	9	13	10	0	13	15
Critical of regulator	0	6	0	0	4	6
Positive about regulator	1	15	3	0	2	1
Critical of corporates	0	3	0	0	3	0
Positive about corporates	0	1	0	0	0	1
Favourable economic Conditions	0	6	15	5	2	2
Unfavourable economic Conditions	1	1	10	0	2	0
Policy suggestion	9	24	13	3	13	7

The *Economic Times* was critical of government on grounds of ‘Administrative efficiency’ (29.2 per cent), ‘Pro-business policy’ (25 per cent), ‘Public interest’ (20.8 per cent) and ‘Efficiency’ (16.6 per cent). It was positive about the government on ‘Pro-business policy’ grounds (25 per cent), followed by ‘Public interest’ principle (21.6 per cent), ‘Administrative efficiency’ (21.6 per cent), ‘Growth as priority’ (16.6 per cent) and ‘Efficiency’ (15 per cent). The paper was critical of regulators on grounds of ‘Pro-business policy’ and ‘Administrative efficiency’, followed by ‘Public interest’. The paper was positive about regulators mostly on grounds of ‘Administrative efficiency’. Instances of critical frame applied to corporates had ‘Administrative efficiency’ and ‘Public interest’ as underlying principles. The paper used ‘Growth as priority’ principle to frame stories as favourable or unfavourable economic circumstances, while it presented policy suggestion on grounds of ‘Administrative efficiency’, ‘Growth as priority’ and ‘Public interest’.

**Table 5. Legitimizations used in Business Line**

Business Line (Six months)	Efficiency	Admin Efficiency	Growth as priority	Markets decide	Welfare Dem/Env/ Equality	Pro-busi- ness policy is good/ Pvt interests
Critical of government	13	14	8	2	9	6
Positive about Government	5	23	8	2	22	12
Critical of regulator	3	9	0	1	2	4
Positive about regulator	3	16	1	2	11	3
Critical of corporates	2	0	0	0	2	1
Positive about corporates	0	0	0	0	1	1
Favourable economic Conditions	0	3	15	4	2	2
Unfavourable economic Conditions	1	7	16	3	2	5
Policy suggestion	3	14	7	2	10	9

*Business Line* was critical of government on grounds of ‘Administrative efficiency’ (26.9 per cent) and ‘Efficiency’ (25 per cent), followed by ‘Public interest’ (17.9 per cent), ‘Growth as priority’ (15.3 per cent) and ‘Pro-business policy’ (11.5 per cent). It was positive about government on grounds of ‘Administrative efficiency’ (31.9 per cent), ‘Public interest’ (30.5 per cent), ‘Pro-business policy’ (16.6 per cent) and ‘Growth as priority’ (11.1 per cent). The paper was both critical and positive of regulators on grounds of ‘Administrative efficiency’, while there were instances of being critical towards corporates on grounds of ‘Efficiency’ and ‘Public interest’. ‘Growth as priority’ was the principle for both favourable and unfavourable economic circumstance frames. The paper’s policy suggestions were mostly on ‘Administrative grounds’ and ‘Public interest’ grounds.

**Table 6. Legitimisations used in Business Standard**

Business standard (Six months)	Efficiency	Admin Efficiency	Growth as priority	Markets decide	Welfare Dem/Env / Equality	Pro-busi- ness policy is good/ Pvt interests
<b>Critical of government</b>	12	23	5	0	5	12
<b>Positive about government</b>	2	19	4	2	5	14
<b>Critical of regulator</b>	0	6	0	1	1	5
<b>Positive about regulator</b>	4	21	1	0	9	3
<b>Critical of corporates</b>	1	0	1	0	1	1
<b>Positive about corporates</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Favourable economic Conditions</b>	2	4	15	4	1	0
<b>Unfavourable economic Conditions</b>	1	5	18	1	1	4
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	14	15	7	0	15	8



*Business Standard* was critical of government on the principle of ‘Administrative efficiency’ (40.3 per cent) and ‘Pro-business policy’ (21 per cent) and ‘Efficiency’ (21 per cent). The paper was also positive about the government on ‘Administrative efficiency’ grounds (41.3 per cent), followed by ‘Pro-business policy’ (30.4 per cent), and ‘Public interest’ (10.8 per cent). It was critical of regulators on ‘Administrative efficiency’ and ‘Pro-business policy’ grounds, while it was positive about regulators on the former principle (55.3 per cent) and ‘Public interest’ (23.6 per cent) principles. The paper was never positive about corporates but there were instances of criticism of them on grounds of ‘Efficiency’, ‘Growth as priority’, ‘Public interest’ and ‘Pro-business policy’. The paper’s frames for favourable and unfavourable economic circumstances were both based on ‘Growth as priority’ principle, while its policy suggestions were made on grounds of ‘Administrative efficiency’, ‘Public interest’ and ‘Efficiency’, followed by ‘Pro-business policy’ and ‘Markets decide’.

**Table – 7 Summary of the Most Used Broad Principles in Each Newspaper**

News paper	Efficiency	Admin Efficiency	Growth as priority	Markets decide	Public Interest	Pro-busi-ness policy / private interests
Mint	32 (11.6%)	<b>96 (34.7%)</b>	44 (15.9%)	16 (5.7%)	60 (21.7%)	28 (10.1%)
ET	28 (10.5%)	<b>83 (31.1%)</b>	53 (19.8%)	10 (3.7%)	49 (18.3%)	44 (16.4%)
BL	30 (10.3%)	<b>86 (29.5%)</b>	55 (18.9%)	16 (5.5%)	61 (20.9%)	43 (14.7%)
BS	36 (13.2%)	<b>93 (34%)</b>	51 (18.6%)	8 (2.9%)	38 (13.9%)	47 (17.2%)

Table -7 shows, *Mint* based its frames mostly on principles of ‘Administrative efficiency’ and ‘Public interest’, followed by ‘Growth as priority’, ‘Efficiency’ and ‘Pro-business policy’. In *Economic Times*, the principle of ‘Administrative efficiency’ supported most of the frames, followed by ‘Growth as priority’, ‘Public interest’, ‘Pro-business policy’ and ‘Efficiency’. In *Business Line*, the frames were based on ‘Administrative

efficiency', 'Public interest', 'Growth as priority', 'Pro-business policy', 'Efficiency and Markets'. In *Business Standard*, 'Administrative efficiency' is the most used principle followed by 'Growth as priority', 'Pro-business policy', 'Public interest' and 'Efficiency'. In all the four newspapers studied, 'Markets' were the least used as the principle to support a frame.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the above analysis, the coverage can be said to be marginally more positive towards the government about which it was critical. This was the pattern across *Mint*, *Economic Times* and *Business Line*, while *Business Standard* was more critical of government than positive. With regard to regulators, the coverage in all the four newspapers was significantly more positive than critical. When it comes to corporates, all four newspapers were critical of corporates with a very small number of instances being positive about them. Around a quarter of the coverage in *Economic Times* and *Business Standard* was presented as neutral policy suggestions, while such coverage in *Mint* and *Business Line* was significantly lower, and closer to a tenth. This suggests that the coverage was not particularly critical of the government, with roughly equal proportion of positive and critical framing.

Further, close to four-fifths of the coverage in all four newspapers put together had journalists themselves as sponsors of the frame, followed by 'Others' which includes columnists, opposition politicians, etc. This indicates that business newspapers largely framed the news themselves, with only a small proportion of stories involving the frames adopted from sources. Only in *Mint* were the frames adopted from 'Government' more frequently than 'Others' including columnists, politicians from other non-ruling parties, etc.

While the papers were marginally more positive about the government overall, interesting details have emerged in terms of the principles or the grounds on which the frames were positive or critical, in different newspapers. In *Mint*, most of the frames used 'Administrative Efficiency' (in the sense of whether the government has done its job well) as the

legitimation or broad principle both when they were critical of government and when they were positive about it. The *Economic Times* was positive about the government mostly on grounds of 'Pro-business policy'. *Business Line* was positive about government on grounds of both 'Administrative efficiency' and 'Public interest'. This indicates that even when newspapers are positive about the government, they were so for different reasons.

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